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ANALYSES OF REAPPLICATIONS
made to the
WORCESTER CHILDREN'S FRIEND SOCIETY
from
October 1931 to October 1941

A Thesis

Submitted by

Henry Barber Brown

(A.B., Dartmouth College, 1934)

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science in Social Service
1942

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INTRODUCTION

This study was undertaken to examine the reasons why clients have found it necessary to reapply to a child placing agency. As a result of questions raised by a group of executives of child placing agencies in a small discussion meeting, this study was instigated. As far as is known no earlier studies have treated this aspect of child care. The study is concerned first with the reasons why the client came to the Agency in the beginning, and the problems with which he asked the Agency's aid. Secondly, how the Agency tried to help him, and may have done so without placing the children under the Agency supervision. Thirdly, why the client returned seeking more assistance. Finally, why it was necessary for the Agency this time to place these children under its supervision rather than assisting the client in some other manner.

The study is also concerned with whether or not the Agency on its part, had used good judgement in the service rendered upon first application. Specifically, was the Agency rendering a service to the clients which was adequate because of the necessity to return for further assistance? Were they returning with new problems which had arisen during the intervening period over which the Agency had no control? Was the Agency being blind to other problems which existed within the families and was only investigating a specific problem without looking at the situation as a whole? Was the Agency taking cases which it had originally refused simply because pressure

had been brought to bear upon it by some outside source? Was there any relationship to the length of time between applications and the problems involved? Was there any special type of clients who returned for further assistance?

These matters of speculation resulted in the following analyses of cases in which one or more applications had been made to the Worcester Children's Friend Society.

Limitations of time made it impossible to examine all the cases of reapplication to the Agency, so the period from October 1, 1931 to October 1, 1941 was chosen as being a representative period. During this time the Agency was under the same executive and the policies remained consistent during the entire period studied.

To comprehend this survey one must first understand the set-up of the Agency. When a client applies for service he is interviewed by a worker in the "Intake" Department. It is the responsibility of this worker to explore the client's problem and all the related factors. With this information obtained, the intake worker offers a solution to the client which is based on sound principles of social work. This original period of study may be a brief interview in which the client is immediately referred to another agency more specialized in his problem, or if it is within the scope of the Agency may be a long period in which the intake worker renders a definite service of adjustment to the client and his family.

If the intake worker and the client decide that the

only solution is supervision¹ the client is then referred to a worker in the "Placing-Out" Department of the Agency. This department is responsible for carrying out the plan evolved in the "Intake" Department and may place the child in a foster home or may supervise the child in its own home.

There is also a "Home-Finding" Department whose sole function is to maintain an approved list of suitable foster homes for the use of the "Placing-Out" Department.

The cases selected were those in which the families applied at one time to the Agency for service, but from which applications the Agency did not accept any child for supervision or placement. Later, when the same families applied a second time, a child or children were accepted for supervision or placement. The cases in which a child or children had been previously under the supervision or placement of the Agency were not included as they presented a different problem. All other cases were included, the one requirement being that the family was referred finally to the "Placing-Out" Department of the Agency.

The cases were selected by an inspection of the Day Book of the Agency within the period of October 1, 1931 to October 1, 1941. These particular dates were chosen as October first is the beginning of the Agency's fiscal year.

1. "Supervision" for the purposes of this study implies that the Agency accepts responsibility for a child which may or may not be placed in a foster home.

There were sixty-five reapplications during the ten year period which were referred to the "Placing-Out" Department. As only the date of reapplication was considered, in some cases the first application may be prior to October 1, 1931. The first step was to read all sixty-five cases and discard those in which a child had been under the care of the Department before. A total of thirty such cases were discarded. As the purpose of this study was to find out why the Agency did not accept a child for supervision or placement at the time of first application, these cases did not fall within that classification. Therefore, they were not included in this study. The remaining thirty-five cases were found to fall within the previously stated limitations.

After the cases were selected, it was necessary to break them down into groups for analysis. They fell into natural groups which form the chapters of this study. Chapter One deals with cases in which the clients applied to the Agency for help, but withdrew to place their children in private homes. Later, they returned, eager to have the Agency assume the responsibility for their children. Chapter Two is devoted to cases in which the Agency placed children at the request of another agency, although it had had earlier applications from the same families which had been adjusted without the necessity of Agency supervision. Chapter Three includes cases which returned for help with different problems than those for which they had at first sought aid. Chapter Four presents

cases which reapplied because of the bad health of the mother. Lastly, Chapter Five consists of cases which do not fall into any of the above classifications.

No schedule was made because of the small number of cases studied. However, all cases state the period of time between applications, the two problems which brought them to the Agency, and the method by which the Agency had dealt with them. Analysis was made from reading the case records and conclusions were drawn after discussions with the workers in the Agency.

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TABLE I

NUMBER OF CASES STUDIED

AND

TOTAL NUMBER IN EACH CLASSIFICATION

WORCESTER CHILDREN'S FRIEND SOCIETY

October 1, 1931 - October 1, 1941

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Number Studied</u>	<u>Total Cases</u>
Failure of Private Placement	7	14
Placement at the Request of Other Agencies	7	7
Unrelated Applications	5	5
Ill-health of the Mother	5	5
Unclassified Cases	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
	28	35

CHAPTER I

THE FAILURE OF PRIVATE PLACEMENTS

The greatest number of cases, fourteen in all, which were accepted by the Agency upon a second request for placement were those in which the client had already tried his own plans, but failing in these returned to the Agency again seeking help. Parents came back admitting that their own plans had been a source of worry to them, or that relatives upon whom they had counted to board their children had for some reason found it necessary to give them up. The unmarried mother was particularly concerned over the worries of keeping her child concealed, and returned asking placement where once she had refused it.

Case 1. On 5/27/36 the mother of a four year old illegitimate child came to the office asking help to buy clothes for her child who was in a private home. Her employment as a domestic was intermittent and consequently she had become indebted to the extent of eighty dollars to the family caring for her child. She felt uncomfortable when she visited her child, and the woman was angered because she was unable to pay the child's board. The mother had applied to the Agency while receiving financial assistance from a family agency which had been supplementing her income. The Agency offered

her placement of the child in a foster home, but she refused. Inasmuch as the family agency felt that her clothing problem could be cared for by government clothing orders, the case was left with that agency.

On 12/12/36, seven months later the worker from the family agency asked for foster home placement of the boy, five years of age. The family with whom he was boarding no longer wanted him because he was an erratic, difficult child whose mother upset him every time she visited him. An investigation by the Agency confirmed the child's history of difficult behavior, and after several interviews with the mother she agreed to a plan by which the Agency would place the child in a foster home.

This case shows that although the mother came to the Agency requesting clothes for her child, the Agency felt that that the underlying problem was the boy's personality which could not be solved merely by the purchase of clothing. The Agency therefore, offered placement, but the mother was not able to recognize the importance of this secondary problem. It was not until seven months later that the mother was brought to this realization with the help of the family agency. She then returned seeking the service which the Agency originally

offered.

Another case of illegitimacy is shown in the following:

Case 2. On 2/20/40 the Agency was asked to place a two months old baby immediately. The father, who made the request, stated that the family's furniture was still in New York, and that, because of expenses attending the baby's birth, they had no place for her to stay. The father resented any questions about himself, and did not indicate that the child was illegitimate.

Inasmuch as he came from out of state he was refused help and referred to an agency near his own home.

Four months later, on 6/18/40, the mother of the child came seeking help. She had been sent by one of the Agency's foster mothers on whom she had forced the baby in desperation due to her inability to find a home. Investigation by the Agency showed that the mother lived within the Agency's district and the baby was accepted for placement in a foster home. The father had concealed these facts in the first application because they could not marry until his divorce became final.

Had the father of this child been willing to give the worker the facts of the case when he first applied there would

have been no need for a second application. Both he and the mother were fearful of anyone learning about the child, and one would judge that in the five months of private care they were constantly beset by worries. This couple returned to the Agency for help when they saw it was their only solution. Both were intelligent people, and made good clients. The problem was one of needing someone on whom they could depend to care for the child, as they came from a small community where both were well known.

Finances play a definite role in private placements. The following case returned after four years when the mother found the financial burden too hard.

Case 3. On 12/22/33 application was made for the care of a three months old illegitimate child. Because of an inter-agency policy relative to the ages of acceptance of illegitimate children, the mother of the child was sent to the agency caring for small babies. She did not go, however, and when that agency followed up the case they found that she had placed the baby in a private home.

Four years later the mother returned. She had been working steadily since the birth of the child and had been able to pay the baby's board, but now she had been laid off and

have been no need for a second application. Both he and the mother were fearful of anyone learning about the child, and one would judge that in the five months of private care they were constantly beset by worries. This couple returned to the agency for help when they saw it was their only solution. Both were intelligent people, and made good clients. The problem was one of needing someone on whom they could depend to care for the child, as they came from a small community where both were well known.

Finances play a definite role in private placements. The following case returned after four years when the mother found the financial burden too hard.

Case 3. On 12/28/35 application was made for the care of a three months old illegitimate child. Because of an infant-agency policy relative to the age of acceptance of illegitimate children, the mother of the child was sent to the agency caring for small babies. She did not go, however, and when that agency followed up the case they found that she had placed the baby in a private home.

Four years later the mother returned. She had been working steadily since the birth of the child and had been able to pay the baby's board, but now she had been laid off and

owed fifty dollars back board. She felt that her parents' home was not suitable for the child due to excessive drinking by her father, and she had no place for the child. Because this immature girl was so confused following the loss of her employment, the child was placed in a foster home by the Agency until she was finally married.

The after care of this illegitimate child shows the greatest part of the problem of illegitimacy. The father of this child was married, and although pressure was put on him by the girl's lawyer and the probation officer, he did not support the child as his own family came first. In this particular case, the home which the girl found for the child was satisfactory as long as she was able to keep up the board payments. Back of her inability to keep up the payments, one found a girl completely upset with the threatened loss of her child. Apparently her only solution was adoption of the child which she did not wish to happen. While her original application to the Agency was refused, she declined to follow up another source of assistance even when it came offering its help. Her second request for assistance came not only after she had exhausted all her own resources, but had also gone into debt.

Sometimes the Agency is consulted from the beginning of the breakup of a marriage. Due to the Agency's policy of

not taking children for placement until the parents have come to a definite decision, cases are sometimes closed without the children being placed, although valuable assistance may have been rendered the parents by the Agency. Such is the case in the following:

Case 4. On 4/8/39 the mother came to the office asking the Agency to place three small children. She and the father had separated, and she had hired a girl to care for the children while she worked. However, she felt that it was too hard for her to return home at night to care for the children after working all day. Placement of the children seemed to be the only solution. After the worker had seen the father, it was apparent that the two did not know their own minds. The case was finally closed by the Agency when arrangements were made whereby the father paid the mother so that she could remain at home and care for the children until they had made up their minds whether or not to live together. A divorce was finally granted, and the father received custody of the children although the arrangement to leave them with the mother continued.

One month later the father asked the

Agency to place the children as the mother had again gone to work. He had the children with him cared for by an inadequate housekeeper. The children were placed in a foster home to the satisfaction of both the mother and the father.

When the mother first applied in this case, investigation showed that it was rather unlikely that she would ever return to the father. She was the weaker of the two, and somewhat lacking in good morals. She did not have a mother's real interest in her children, and it was not surprising to the Agency that the plan which the two worked out was not successful. It remained for the Agency to re-open its case and place the children in a foster home.

This case is representative of the cases of domestic relations with which a child placing agency has to deal; the first application coming from one parent, the second from the other. It was not until the divorce was actually granted that the father realized the mother was more interested in other things than the children. He was not seeking placement of the children at first, but when he saw the need for them to have a home which provided more than food and shelter he reapplied to the Agency. This man was never uncooperative toward the Agency, and seemed quite pleased with himself that he had been able to work out a plan for his children which to him seemed sound. Such a client who sees the failure of his own plans is much

more inclined to aid the social worker in making other plans, than those who come without this experience.

Occasionally the Agency renders an advisory service to a parent who has withdrawn his application to place the child in a private family. This particular case is one in which the Agency made all the necessary investigation and offered to place the child, only to find the father satisfied with plans he had made himself. He did, however, return to the Agency wishing some guarantee that it would take care of his child in the event of his death.

Case 5. On 3/17/36 the father applied for help in planning for his five year old boy following the desertion of the mother. The father was found to be a very intelligent man who had worked hard to improve himself. The relatives on both sides of the family were most sympathetic toward him because of the mother's desertion. Despite their interest, none of their homes were suitable and the Agency offered to place the child in a foster home. The father, however, was satisfied with the temporary private home he had found and withdrew his application.

A year later the father returned to the Agency stating that he was worried about

what would happen to the boy if he died.

He wished the Agency to guarantee to care for the child in the event of his death.

It was suggested that his insurance be written with the boy as beneficiary but with the Agency as trustee. By this procedure the Agency would always be in touch with the child, if not actually caring for him.

Another year passed and father again returned, this time saying that he was dissatisfied with the home in which his boy was living. He felt that partiality was being shown to the woman's own children and as a result the boy's disposition was being spoiled. He was very much upset over the home and asked now that the Agency place his child in one of its homes. Acting on the original decision, the Agency placed the boy in a foster home.

This man came first to the Agency seeking a home for his child. While the Agency was making the investigation he had already placed the boy in a private family. Although this arrangement remained satisfactory to him for almost two years, it is interesting to note that he returned to consult with the Agency. It indicated that he felt the security of the Agency

was behind him. Coming as a stranger to the Agency the first time, he must have received the help he wished and felt that he had found someone to whom he could turn if his own plans did not work out. It is extremely significant that he wished the Agency to guarantee care of his child in the event of his death and consequently not surprising that he eventually returned to the Agency for foster home care when he found his child maladjusted in the home of his choice.

Illness of the foster mother is sometimes the cause of failure in a private placement and the reason the Agency accepts a child.

Case 6. On 9/6/30 the Agency was asked advice by another agency about a private home which an unmarried mother was planning to use for her new born child. The plan was to use this home and send the mother to a correctional school. The Agency disapproved the home, but was not asked to make any other plans for the child.

Eight years later the mother applied. She was married and still boarding her illegitimate child. Inasmuch as the foster mother was sick, she was seeking a temporary home for the child. The Agency placed the child in a foster home temporarily. It then tried

to make the mother realize that she should take the child into her own home now that she was married. This she refused to do despite her husband's approval of the plan. Therefore, because the Agency felt that the child should be with the mother and her husband, it refused further care of the child. The mother was then forced to make other plans and she placed the child in an orphanage.

It would appear that this girl had at first made reasonable provision for her child, and when she returned to the Agency eight years later she was asking only temporary care. In talking with the worker she admitted that she had had many worries over the child during the years, and more than once she had thought she would come to the Agency for advice. Her own family had disowned her following the birth of the child, and now that she was married she was afraid she would jeopardize her happiness by having the child at home.

Eight years after the child's birth this girl was no nearer a decision about the child than the day it was born. In the first instance the Agency was not given any chance to help the girl other than to say whether or not it approved the proposed home. Under these conditions it was not ethical for the Agency to attempt to make plans for the child. Obviously, this girl was in need of help which only the Agency

could give her. It might have been that if the child could have been supervised by the Agency at the time of first application, the mental attitude of the mother could have been changed by contact with the Agency over a period of years and she might have been willing to have taken the child into her home after marriage. As the case turned out, it seems that the Agency was a little hasty in refusing to keep the child, at least for a longer period of time. After more consideration the mother might have changed her mind and allowed the child to be taken into her home, thus saving the child from a life in an orphanage.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of private placement is the abuse of a child by those having the responsibility of its care.

Case 7. On 12/31/29 the mother of two children asked for care of herself and children. The home that day was broken up and she was very "nervous". The Agency found that the mother was on the verge of a psychosis and under the treatment of a psychiatrist in the social service department of a hospital. For this reason no further inquiry was made and the mother was sent back to the hospital social service. A year and a half later

the hospital social service department asked the Agency to take the children in order to give the mother a rest. During the investigation the mother was committed to the State Hospital. The father withdrew the application and placed the children privately. On 6/30/37 the woman's probation officer asked the Agency to take the youngest girl as she had been sexually abused by a man in the home in which she was living.

This case is concrete evidence of the risks of private placements. The new law² recently enacted may help to reduce such risks as this because the Department of Public Welfare is now required to place its approval upon homes where children are boarded. At the same time it may force parents to seek the help of a private agency sooner due to the difficulty of finding homes which meet the approval of the Department.

Table II shows the cases which failed in private placements during the period studied. These cases are compiled in this manner as further case by case analysis seems repetitive. The Table shows the cause of the first application, the reason

2. Chapter 629 Section 1-8 of Mass. Acts of 1941 provide that persons boarding a child under fourteen years of age, for gain, shall be licensed by the Dept. of Public Welfare.

TABLE I
ANALYSIS OF CASES WHICH WERE ACCEPTED ON REAPPLICATION
TO THE
WORCESTER CHILDREN'S FRIEND SOCIETY
WHEN PRIVATE PLACEMENT FAILED
October 1, 1931 - October 1, 1941

Case No.	Reason for Application	Reason Not Placed	Agency Disposition of Case
1	Illegitimacy	Wished financial help in private placement	Left with Associated Charities
2	Illegitimacy	Out of area	Referred to local agency
3	Illegitimacy	Baby too young	Referred to Girls' Welfare Soc.
4	Separation of parents	Withdrew	Withdrawn
5	Desertion of mother	Withdrew	Withdrawn
6	Illegitimacy	Withdrew	Referred Bd. of Public Welfare
7	Separation of parents	Withdrew	Left with Memorial Hos. Soc. Ser.
8	Illegitimacy	Withdrew	Referred to Girls' Welfare Soc.
9	Desertion of father	Summer vacation asked	Referred to Fresh Air Fund
10	Marital difficulties	Parents not separated	Left with Chief Probation Officer
11	Separation of parents	Wished financial help in private placement	Refused
12	Separation of parents	Withdrew	Withdrawn
13	Death of mother	Withdrew	Withdrawn
14	Divorce of parents	Withdrew	Withdrawn

TABLE II (CONTINUED)
ANALYSIS OF CASES WHICH WERE ACCEPTED ON REAPPLICATION
TO THE
WORCESTER CHILDREN'S FRIEND SOCIETY
WHEN PRIVATE PLACEMENT FAILED
October 1, 1931 - October 1, 1941

Case No.	Client's Placement of Child	Time Between Applications	Secondary Cause for Reapplication
1	Associated Charities & private placement	7 months	Problem child
2	Private placement	4 months	Succession of private placements
3	Private placement	4 years	Unable to pay board in private placement. In-eligible for Board of Public Welfare
4	Mother	4 months	Mother wished to work
5	Private placement	1½ years	Dissatisfied with private placement
6	Private placement	8 years	Illness of foster mother
7	Private placement	7½ years	Sexual abuse of child in private placement
8	Relatives	1 month	Relatives went to work
9	Fresh Air Fund & private placement	3 years	Problem child. Too difficult for private placement.
10	Nothing	2 years	Parents divorced. Father unable to pay board in private placement
11	Private placement	11 years	Problem child. Succession of private placements
12	Private placement	2 years	Succession of private placements
13	Relatives	10 months	Relatives refused care any longer
14	Private placement	5 months	Succession of private placements

why the children were not placed, the disposition of the Agency, and the disposition of the client, the time between applications, and the cause of the final application which resulted in the placement of the children.

As can be seen from the Table, the length of time between applications ranged from one month to eleven years. The median length of time was fourteen months. It is doubtful if any interpretation can be drawn from this because of the wide range in such a small number of cases.

It is significant, however, that of the fourteen cases studied, in all but one, the client's own solution was placement of the child. To be sure, several of the cases were placed with relatives, but this is usually both the client's and the Agency's first thought when placement seems advisable.

There appear from a study of the Table to be four definite reasons why private placements failed:

1. Parents' inability to pay board.
2. Children too difficult for the home.
3. Home's inability to keep the children.
4. Dissatisfaction with the private placement.

Parents' Inability to Pay Board

In two cases the parents asked only for financial assistance in maintaining their children in private homes. This was their first recognition of the fact that they did not have the ability to care for the children without some form of assistance. Some of these reasons, however, overlap as indicated

in Case 1, in which such an application was only a disclosure of greater problems such as a difficult boy as well as an interfering parent. In these two cases even after the Agency had found that financial assistance would not be the solution, the clients preferred to withdraw their applications and maintain their status quo. It seemed that the Agency lacked the ability to convince these parents that they were being short-sighted in not permitting the Agency to help them. This is not intended as a criticism of the Agency, but of social work in general.

Children Too Difficult for the Home

Next, there are three cases in which the children were difficult problems and beyond the ability of the average private home. In one case, the interference of a parent in the private placement while the foster parents were sincerely trying to bring up a child not their own, aided in making this child a difficult problem. The other two cases represented sulky, disagreeable children who brought no pleasure to the homes in which they had been placed. Their foster parents needed encouragement and guidance such as the Agency could offer. Instead, they were faced with the difficulty of dealing directly with a critical parent.

Home's Inability to Keep the Children

Four cases showed the instability of private placement by the fact that they gave up the children after a relatively short time. In two cases the foster mother went to work, ap-

parently without consideration of the fact that the parents had depended upon her to care for the children. In one case the foster mother became ill. This is a somewhat unpredictable factor but it assumes importance in the life of a boarded child. The Agency realizes this and considers the health of prospective foster parents, whereas it probably does not occur to the client when he is seeking a home. In the fourth case the relatives gave up the child after ten months, indicating that they lacked any real interest in the child as they had no reason other than the fact that they were tired of her.

All these cases demonstrate the lack of ability of the clients to foresee eventualities which affect the future lives of their children.

Dissatisfaction with the Private Placement

The largest group were those parents who were dissatisfied with the foster home in which they had placed their children. A father felt his child was discriminated against. An unmarried mother feared disclosure of her secret. A child was sexually abused. These incidents of fear, discrimination, and abuse became concrete problems in the lives of the clients who returned seeking the help of the Agency.

It is not fair to say that all private placements fail, as there are so many factors involved in such action; the personalities of the parents, of the child, and of the foster home being the most dominant. In addition to this

there are the factors of financing, composition of the foster family, religion and health. Each of these in itself is able to cause a breakdown not only in a private placement, but also in an Agency placement. However, the chief advantage of Agency placement over private placement is, that the Agency has more homes from which to choose, and has the experience in picking a home for a child so as to minimize these factors. In addition to this, the Agency has a much more secure footing in a foster family, having chosen it for its stability and its potential ability to deal with the prospective child.

While the Agency has many functions, it is interesting to note that in the study of those cases in which private placement was tried by the parents, all cases fell into two classifications; illegitimacy and domestic relations. Could there be any significance to this finding in such a small number of cases? This may be a possible indication that the private placement is resorted to only in cases of extreme pressure.

Conclusions

From the evidence presented by the fourteen cases, the writer concludes that the client's first desire is to work out a solution for himself. Even with the Agency's help he prefers to use his own plan first. He subsequently finds that he did not see all the problems involved, but was merely providing for the immediate situation rather than for the future. Second; the success of private placements depends principally on the payment of board and the behavior of the child. Third;

in cases of illegitimacy the mother of the child needs guidance in planning for the future of the child in addition to the child's need of a home. Fourth; there is a definite risk in private placements in the possible abuse of a child. Fifth; all the cases studied in which private placement was resorted to by the client were those of domestic relations or illegitimacy.

The Worcester Children's Friend Society maintains a policy of putting its services at the disposal of the various agencies. By this procedure it accepts cases which are usually withdrawn.

Case 18. On 7/22/32 the father of a three year old girl asked the agency to care for her. He had separated from the mother, taking his child with him. He felt that he had been deceived by the mother when he learned later after marriage that she had borne three illegitimate children prior to the marriage and had also served a term in prison. When he found that the agency did not maintain an institution he withdrew his application as he felt he did not want the child in a foster home. A year later he returned. In the intervening period, the child had returned to her mother and he had obtained a divorce and

CHAPTER II

PLACEMENT AT THE REQUEST OF OTHER AGENCIES

This chapter is devoted to the discussion of cases in which an original application was made to the Agency but, for various reasons the child was not placed. At a subsequent date, upon application of another agency, the child was placed in a foster home.

The Worcester Children's Friend Society maintains a policy of putting its services at the disposal of the various courts. By this procedure it accepts many cases which were formerly withdrawn.

Case 15. On 7/22/36 the father of a five year old girl asked the Agency to care for her. He had separated from the mother, taking his child with him. He felt that he had been deceived by the mother when he learned later after marriage that she had borne three illegitimate children prior to the marriage and had also served a term in prison. When he found that the Agency did not maintain an institution he withdrew his application as he felt he did not want the child in a foster home. A year later he returned. In the intervening period, the child had returned to her mother and he had obtained a divorce and

re-married. This time he sought help in obtaining custody of the girl as he felt she was being brought up in immoral surroundings. At the advice of the Agency a petition was made to Probate Court.

The court then requested the Agency to place the child in a foster home while an inquiry was being made into the situation. The judge felt that neither parent should have the child until it was decided which one was suitable to care for her. Meanwhile, the child remained in the Agency's care until custody was finally awarded to the father.

This case is the type in which a private agency generally does not wish to assist. The mother with three illegitimate children, who had served a prison sentence, appeared to have no interest whatsoever in this child. Likewise, there was a question as to whether or not the father had any real interest in the child as he allowed her to return to the mother. If this were true, and the Agency took the child it was possible that the parents would disappear leaving the Agency solely responsible for the child. The Agency would be unable to commit the child to the State because as long as she remained in a foster home she was neither dependent nor neglected. Because the Probate Court asked the Agency to take the child, an oppor-

re-served. This time he sought help in
obtaining custody of the girl as he felt
she was being brought up in immoral sur-
roundings. At the advice of the Agency
a petition was made to Probate Court.
The court then requested the Agency to
place the child in a foster home while an
inquiry was being made into the situation.
The Judge felt that neither parent should
have the child until it was decided which
one was suitable to care for her. Mean-
while, the child remained in the Agency's
care until somebody was finally awarded to
the latter.

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erally does not wish to assist. The mother with three illegiti-
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home some time, and the Agency took the child to her parents
that the parents would disappear leaving the Agency solely re-
sponsible for the child. The Agency would be unable to commit
the child to the State because as long as she remained in a
foster home she was neither dependent nor neglected. Because
the Probate Court asked the Agency to take the child, an agree-

tunity was given to study the whole situation, and as a result the father was granted custody of the girl.

The three following cases illustrate the Agency's relationship with the Juvenile Court. They represent cases in which the children were not taken by the Agency the first time, but upon the request of the Juvenile Court they were placed in foster homes under the supervision of the Agency.

Case 16. On 1/20/30 a mother applied to the Agency for the care of two boys, age six and seven. The boys were in a local orphanage following the desertion of their father. After investigation by the Agency it was found that the mother was two hundred dollars behind in her board to the orphanage and needed financial assistance. Her desire to place the children with the Agency was mainly because she was in arrears in her board rather than an interest in foster home care. Therefore, the Agency refused to take the boys and sent her to the Board of Public Welfare for financial aid. Five years later the mother again came to the Agency. The father, in the meantime, had committed suicide. The boys were now in an institution and the mother thought

it would be nice for them to be on a farm for the summer. Before the Agency had had time to reinvestigate the case, the mother had withdrawn her application as she had found a home for the boys herself.

On 2/15/38 the mother again came to the Agency sent by the Child Guidance Clinic. The boys had been living at home for the past six months and the mother could not control the oldest, who was difficult and before the Juvenile Court as a school offender. The Child Guidance Clinic, at the request of the Court, reported that the boy's difficulties were caused by the mother's failure to make a home for him until recently. They urged foster home placement to the Court in order that he might have a fresh start in a new environment away from antagonistic school authorities. They felt that if the Agency would take the boy, his difficulties might disappear. Accordingly, the boy was taken by the Agency and placed in a foster home.

The disinterest of a mother, who was willing that her children be placed in orphanages and institutions instead of her making a real home for them, could not help but make itself

shown in some unfortunate manner, such as the difficult behavior which the older boy manifested.

Case 17. On 11/12/29 a neighbor asked the Agency to speak with a father about his two boys who he considered were not getting adequate care. The mother had recently died and they were being cared for in the home by a fifteen year old sister. After talking with the Agency the father decided he did not wish to place the boys in a foster home and would continue as he had been doing.

Nine years later the Juvenile Court asked the Agency to place the younger boy age sixteen. The boy had been placed on probation for stealing, but he had asked the probation officer to send him to a correctional school as he was so unhappy at home with his father and new step-mother. It was learned that the boy was a great problem at home and his conduct caused a great deal of difficulty with the others in the home. His father was unable to discipline him and resorted to calling him shiftless, lazy and no good. This was the situation which the Court thought the

Agency might be able to remedy by a foster home and consequently asked for placement. The boy was placed in a foster home by the Agency.

Had the father been willing, this boy could have benefited much earlier through the assistance of the Agency. If, through an interview, the father could not see the inadequacy of his arrangements, it seems that the Agency should have forced enlightenment upon him by referring the case to the protective agency for possible charge of neglect.

Case 18. On 9/10/37 a thirteen year old boy was referred to the Agency by the family doctor. The doctor asked the Agency to investigate as he felt the father was trying to get rid of the boy.

A visit was made to the home and the worker talked with the step-mother. She referred to the boy as a problem because of his lying, stealing and running away. As the father was not there, a letter was written to him offering the services of the Agency. He did not reply and the case was dropped. One month later, the Juvenile Court asked the Agency to take the boy as he had run away. The pro-

bation officer did not feel that the boy should return home until a more complete investigation had been made. The boy was placed in a foster home. The investigation proved that the boy had been cruelly and abusively treated. He had been beaten, starved, disclaimed and overworked. He was accepted by the Agency for a long term placement in a foster home.

This case appeared to reflect upon the judgement of the Agency in closing it without any action. The Agency is not a protective agency, but there is one in the community. It would seem that there was definitely an implication of neglect here, and that it should have been referred to the protective agency for further investigation. Such action might have prevented another runaway on the part of the boy, and might have straightened out the home situation without the necessity of court action. By the time the boy had reached the court he would not return home. His running away was his own method of getting out of a very difficult and unbearable home situation.

In addition to serving the Courts, the Agency accepts for temporary care any child made homeless regardless of cause. This service is utilized many times by the Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the following two cases are representative of this aspect of the Agency's work.

Case 19. On 2/6/28 the mother applied for foster home care of her six year old boy. He was living with his grandmother but she could no longer keep him. Investigation of the case showed that the mother had already had one child committed to the State as neglected, and that this boy was being supported by a board of public welfare. The Agency refused to do anything for the mother, feeling that the responsibility lay with the board of public welfare. Fours years later the mother again asked for placement. The boy was living out of town and she wanted him near her. Inasmuch as the situation remained the same as before she was again refused any assistance.

On 11/10/38 the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children asked immediate temporary care for the boy, aged sixteen. He had been living with his aunt who had turned him out, and as his mother had only a single furnished room he had no place to go. Investigation showed that the boy had rheumatic heart disease and needed better than average care. His aunt had felt that as he was sixteen he should now support him-

self. The Agency felt that because of his heart condition that further care should be given to him. Consequently he was placed in a foster home after an investigation was completed.

This case probably would have been consistently refused had it not been for the emergency situation. This is another example of a case in which the Agency feared being left with a child whose mother had already neglected one child. This boy was a public charge. Some public agencies terminate their services when possible at sixteen years of age, but this boy with a bad heart was not able to earn his living as boys the same age in good health. The request of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was the determining factor which resulted in the Agency's acceptance of this child despite two previous refusals.

The following case is interesting because it represents the Agency's refusal to take a child into care without guardianship, and reversing itself because emergency care was requested by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Case 20. On 1/10/40 the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children asked the Agency for foster home care for a fifteen year old girl who could not get

along with her father and step-mother.

She was living with her grandmother, but

found it equally difficult there. The

father was employed and earning enough

to support the family and the Agency

felt that before the girl was placed in

a foster home, the father should agree to

support her. This he refused to do. As

the girl was becoming increasingly dif-

ficult, the solution lay in the Agency

assuming guardianship in order to place

the girl and force her father to support

her. She refused to name the Agency as

guardian so the Agency then refused to go

any further with the case despite its know-

ledge that the girl needed help. The Soci-

ety for the Prevention of Cruelty to Child-

ren, failing to obtain placement from the

Agency, placed her in the home of an aunt.

Nine months later the Society for

the Prevention of Cruelty to Children asked

for emergency care for the girl as the aunt

had turned her out and refused to have her

back. The Agency took her temporarily, but

this time was able to obtain her father's

consent to support her as he saw no other

solution. With this action completed, the Agency made plans to keep her indefinitely.

There was no question but what the father was able to pay for the girl's support, but it would seem that this should have been foregone for the best interests of the child. This case appears to be one in which the child should have been placed when the first application was made without the need of a second application for the same problem.

Case 21. On 1/21/37 the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children asked the Agency to care for three children who were being neglected by their father and mother. The oldest, a girl sixteen had been abused by the father and had sought shelter in an orphanage where she had spent her earlier years. Although investigation by the Agency confirmed the first agency's findings, it refused to place the children in a foster home because it felt that the background and mentality of the children were so poor as to preclude any chance of success with them. They were a time-consuming type of case that yielded little results. Three months later the Society

for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children asked the Agency to reconsider its earlier decision and care for the sixteen year old girl. She had returned home to her father and was alone with him as the mother had been committed to the State Hospital during the intervening period. The Agency agreed, that if, after the girl had been seen by the Child Guidance Clinic and the psychiatrist, they felt that the Agency could help by placing her in a foster home, it would do so. The Clinic recommended placing the girl in a foster home, and it was accordingly done.

This case was one which the Agency thought undesirable from many points of view. It definitely refused to care for the children and left the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to make other plans for them. The Agency was urged to reconsider the application. In order to be fair about its earlier decision the Agency had the girl seen by a psychiatrist skilled in the problems of adolescence. In this case the Agency reversed itself and accepted the judgement of the group.

This case was included in this group because it shows that the Agency will reconsider a case once refused, and will carry its investigation further in an effort to do the best

possible thing for the child.

Conclusions

From a study of these cases it would seem that the Agency would never have taken any of them into consideration had not pressure been put upon it by outside sources.

In three of the cases the basic problems remained the same, but increased in intensity. These cases are ones with an aspect of public responsibility which the Agency was very reluctant to take. It was afraid the parents might disappear leaving the Agency entirely responsible for the children. Therefore, the Agency waited until the problems became so acute they were almost a moral obligation to the community to take them.

In two of the cases when applications were made, the problem was dependency which the Agency does not assist. They were, consequently, left with the agencies already giving them that assistance. However, when the problem changed and became a treatment of difficult children, the Agency was willing to place them.

In two other cases the Agency's investigation of the cases were too superficial to draw any valid conclusions as to whether or not neglect was a factor, so that on the surface the Agency's services were not needed. There remained, however enough evidence to warrant reference to the protective agency to make a final decision as to whether or not legal steps should be taken for the protection of the children.

To summarize these cases it appeared that:

The Agency will not accept cases at the request of another agency without first investigating the case.

The Agency will not take children into its care if the situation is not agreeable to the Agency, unless the situation becomes so critical that there is no other place for the children to go.

The Agency used poor judgement in not referring cases of neglect and abuse to protective agencies.

The need of the child should be the primary factor in accepting a case rather than the financial assets of the father.

The Agency is fearful of becoming solely responsible in some dependent cases.

CHAPTER III

UNRELATED APPLICATIONS

Agencies are familiar with the clients that return for assistance due to a new problem arising. This type of reapplication accounted for five of the cases in this study, and an analysis follows to determine the difference between the two problems causing the applications.

Case 22. On 6/5/29 a mother telephoned asking the Agency to take her four children as the father had just deserted. It was found that she was being aided by the Board of Public Welfare so assistance was refused. On 8/15/29 the mother again applied as the father had deserted a second time, and the family had received a notice of eviction. She was again refused as she still was being aided by the Board of Public Welfare.

On 8/5/41 the fourteen year old boy was referred by an older man. The boy had been selling papers outside his office, and seemed continually depressed. Investigation revealed that the mother had remarried and the step-father drank excessively. As both parents worked, the boy was largely unsupervised. He had al-

ready been in court for stealing along with an older brother, but because of his youth he was placed on probation while the brother was sent to a correctional school. As he was fast becoming a delinquent child he was accepted by the Agency for foster home care for the summer.

The refusal of the first two applications was based on the fact that the family was aided by the Board of Public Welfare, and the problem was that of dependency. The fact that the breakup of the family was imminent might have been a cause for the Agency to go further into its investigation, but as the Agency's policy limited its services to particular problems involving the child, it was justified in refusing service and leaving the case with the Board of Public Welfare. The third application was caused by a problem boy. The mother remarked that if the Agency had helped her the first time she applied she never would have had all the subsequent trouble. This may be a rationalization on her part, but it remained for the Agency to wait until there was a specific problem within the family before taking any action.

The following case is one in which the father felt that the mother was not caring for the family properly, but because of her refusal to work with a social agency little was done.

Case 23. On 1/16/28 the father applied

to the Agency for supervision of his children in their own home as he felt the mother did not give them the necessary care. After talking with the father he was referred to the family agency. The family agency made several calls at the home, but withdrew when the mother insisted that she did not want their help. The father later returned saying that he wished them to continue, but it seemed futile as the mother continually forbade their coming.

On 8/5/40 the mother applied to the Agency for the care of her boy aged twelve. He was stealing, and was a problem in school. The Agency felt that in such a large family this boy was not getting the supervision he needed and that a foster home might help him. For this reason the boy was accepted by the Agency.

Because of poor home conditions, the first application was rightfully referred to a family agency that they might assist the father in making the home better. The definite problems which arose after a period of thirteen years accounted for the re-application of this case.

Case 24. On 5/22/28 a mother asked the

Agency to help with plans for six of eight children while she went to the hospital for confinement. Rather than place so many children from one family the Agency found an aunt who was willing to act as housekeeper so there was no necessity to place the children.

On 5/6/40 an application was made for an eleven year old girl in the family suffering from chorea. As the home was now crowded with twelve children this child did not get sufficient rest necessary for the treatment of her illness. Because of this, the child was accepted for convalescent care in a foster home.

The first application made by the mother was one which the Agency practically always accepts for foster home care. This particular time it was not necessary to use placement although the Agency assisted in obtaining a housekeeper. The second application for a convalescent girl had no relationship to the earlier problem, and the case was readily accepted.

The following case is interesting because it shows the failure of the applicant to tell the Agency that she was already receiving help from another agency.

Case 25. On 10/3/38 the mother of two

small children asked for foster home care. She and the father had had a very unhappy married life and quarreled continually. Upon the advice of her priest she wished to separate from him. Further inquiry made the Agency feel the case was one of domestic relations and suggested to the mother that she go to the family agency for help. It was later discovered that at the time she had applied she was receiving advice from the family agency, but did not mention it. The Agency had been neglectful in not registering the case with the Social Service Index which would have disclosed the already existing relationship with the family agency.

Two and a half years later the mother returned to the Agency. She and the father had been separated for about six months and recently her ten year old girl had been having frequent fainting spells. The doctor had advised her that this was caused by the girl's unhappiness over the home situation and had advised placement in a foster home. Investigation

by the Agency showed that the doctor's diagnosis was essentially correct and in addition there were accompanying health problems. In the hopes that these difficulties could be cleared up, the child was placed in a foster home.

The problem which the mother presented to the worker when she first applied was one of marital difficulties and it was quite natural for the worker to refer her to a family agency which specialized in this type of case. The mother gave no indication that the children were affected by the quarreling, nor did the Agency investigate to find out. It is a question whether or not the Agency should have done this before leaving the problems in the hands of another agency.

Case 26. On 8/26/36 a mother applied asking for care for two children age two and three. Investigation showed that although the mother asked for placement what she really wanted was to give up her employment and stay home to care for the children. Because the family income was insufficient if she did not work, she was referred to the family agency for financial assistance in maintaining the family.

Three years later the mother

by the Agency showed that the doctor's
diagnosis was essentially correct and
in addition there were accompanying
health aspects. In the hope that
these difficulties could be cleared up,
the child was placed in a foster home.
The problem which the mother presented to the agency
when she first applied was one of marital difficulties and it
was quite natural for the worker to refer her to a family agen-
cy which specialized in this type of case. The mother gave no
indication that the children were affected by the separation,
nor did the agency investigate to find out. It is a question
whether or not the Agency should have done this before leaving
the problem in the hands of another agency.

Case 35. On 8/26/38 a mother applied
seeking for care for her children age
two and three. Investigation showed
that although the mother asked for
placement what she really wanted was
to give up her employment and stay home
to care for the children. Because the
family income was insufficient if she
did not work, she was referred to the
family agency for financial assistance
in maintaining the family.
Three years later the mother

returned to the Agency. The parents had separated and the girl was living with relatives. The five year old boy was being treated at the Child Guidance Clinic for his cruelty to animals, fighting with other children, and his aggressiveness. These problems were of such severity that the mother could not deal with them at home and the boy was placed in a foster home.

The first application in this case was because of insufficient income, with no indication that there was a problem child. Three years elapsed before the family returned to the Agency with a new problem, during which time the family situation had changed entirely.

TABLE III

Reasons for First and Second Applications to the
Worcester Children's Friend Society

October 1, 1931 to October 1, 1941

<u>Case</u>	<u>Time between Applications</u>	<u>First Application</u>	<u>Second Application</u>
22	12 years	Desertion of father	Problem child
23	13 years	Poor home conditions	Problem child
24	12 years	Illness of mother	Health of child
25	2½ years	Marital difficulties	Problem child
26	3 years	Insufficient income	Problem child

Conclusion

From an analysis of the cases in this chapter it appears that the great lapse of time between applications precluded the discovery of any subsequent problems at the time of the first applications. However, it is recognized that the initial problems were contributing factors to the subsequent problems.

Case 27. On 2/24/37 the Board of Public Welfare asked the Agency to care for a thirteen months old baby while the mother went to the hospital for an operation. The next day the request was withdrawn when it was found that the father could care for the child himself as he was not working. Four months later the mother again asked the Agency to care for the baby while she returned to the hospital for a second operation. The father was not working and there was no one to care for the child. The Agency then placed her in a foster home until the mother was able to return home.

This case is typical of one of the more simple functions of the Agency. If the Agency finds that there is no one to care for children while the mother is in a hospital it will accept the responsibility and place the children in foster homes.

Case 28. On 3/21/39 the father of two

CHAPTER IV

ILL-HEALTH OF THE MOTHER

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze why the first request of a family for foster home care was refused but, the same request at a later date, occasioned by the illness of the mother, was accepted.

Case 27. On 2/24/37 the Board of Public Welfare asked the Agency to care for a thirteen months old baby while the mother went to the hospital for an operation. The next day the request was withdrawn when it was found that the father could care for the child himself as he was not working. Four months later the mother again asked the Agency to care for the baby while she returned to the hospital for a second operation. The father was now working and there was so one to care for the child. The Agency then placed her in a foster home until the mother was able to return home.

This case is typical of one of the more simple functions of the Agency. If the Agency finds that there is no one to care for children while the mother is in a hospital it will accept the responsibility and place the children in foster homes.

Case 28. On 6/29/39 the father of two

children asked the Agency to care for them as he was about to be evicted for non-payment of rent. He did not want to apply for public assistance as he felt he had been mistreated by the Board of Public Welfare in the past. Inasmuch as his problem was financial, he was referred to the family agency rather than the Board of Public Welfare.

Three months later the family agency requested care for the two children in order to allow the mother to rest and regain her health prior to an operation. The request was granted and five weeks of foster home care was given the two children.

In this case, the first application was for financial assistance and consequently was referred to another agency. The second application was due to the mother's ill-health and therefore care was given the children.

Case 29. On 8/15/36 the Board of Public Welfare asked the Agency to place a thirteen year old boy in a foster home for the summer. His parents were divorced and he was living with a very erratic mother whose

close association with him was adversely affecting his personality. It was hoped that by separating them and placing this boy in a normal foster home his personality might improve. The Agency was unable to obtain the mother's consent to this plan and the case was consequently closed. However, one year later the Board of Public Welfare again asked the Agency to care for this boy. This time they had been successful in committing the mother to the State Hospital and in transferring the custody over to the father who had consented to the plan of foster home care. With this obstacle overcome the Agency was able to care for the boy.

In this case the health of the mother was the primary reason for both applications. From the beginning, the Agency felt that the boy was being adversely affected by his long association with his mother, but it was not a situation in which neglect could be proven and the child taken away by law. For this reason the Agency was unable to render any service when first asked, but had to wait until part of the situation had changed.

Case 30. On 10/27/37 a neighbor asked the

close association with him was adversely
affecting his personality. It was hoped
that by separating them and placing him
boy in a normal foster home his personal-
ity might improve. The Agency was unable
to obtain the mother's consent to this
plan and the case was consequently closed.
However, one year later the Board of Public
Welfare again asked the Agency to care for
this boy. This time they had been successful
in convincing the mother to let the boy
remain and in terminating the custody
over to the father who had consented in the
plan of foster home care. With this agree-
ment the Agency was able to care
for the boy.
In this case the mother was the primary
reason for her opposition. From the beginning, the Agency
felt that the boy was being adversely affected by his long as-
sociation with his mother, but it was not a situation in which
negotiations could be pursued and the child taken away by law. For
this reason the Agency was unable to render any service when
first asked, but now the child's well-being of the situation had
changed.

Case No. 10/27/37 a neighbor asked the

Agency to help a family with three children. The father was ill in the hospital and the mother who was six months pregnant, had no money to buy food. They were accordingly referred to the family agency for financial assistance. Three years later the mother asked care for her four children while she went to the hospital for a confinement. Arrangements were made by the Agency for the grandmother to take the three oldest children and the baby was placed in a foster home.

The first application because of insufficient income was an application to the wrong agency. The Agency merely acted as a source of information so that the family would go immediately to the correct agency. The second application had no relation to the first, but simply involved the care of the children due to the health of the mother.

Case 31. On 9/3/35 a mother asked the Agency to care for her five months old baby as she and the father had separated. Investigation by the Agency showed that both parents were working, and were financially able to take care of the child. In addition to this, the separation was over

trivialities and reconciliation seemed possible. Therefore, the mother was told that the Agency would not care for the child and she would have to care for it herself.

Four years later the father asked the Agency's help. The parents had become reconciled when they had found it difficult to board their child. This time the mother was ill in the hospital and the father was unable to care for the three children. With the help of the Agency two of the children were placed with their grandmother, and the youngest was put in a foster home.

The good judgement of the Agency in refusing to care for the child upon the first request was corroborated later by the reconciliation of the parents. It would appear from the record that this obstacle was instrumental in bringing the parents together again and indicates that the Agency should not make it too easy for parents to transfer the responsibility of their children to other people.

Conclusions

In all of these cases but one, the Agency was merely rendering a special service to the community by temporarily placing the children in foster homes while the mothers were

ill. There were no problems involved in the children and the first application had no relationship whatsoever to the subsequent application in these cases.

This type of service, although generously given, is often abused. When a mother becomes ill and finds hospitalization necessary, it is often much easier to ask the Agency for assistance than it is to bother making arrangements within the family. It is for this reason that the Agency makes a complete investigation before caring for the child.

In the remaining case, however, the ill-health of the mother became a definite problem, and both applications pertained to this problem. It was not until the mother's mental illness became acute enough for hospitalization that the situation changed making placement of the child possible.

CHAPTER V

UNCLASSIFIED CASES

A study of four cases comprise the contents of this chapter. These cases are not logically classified in any previous grouping.

Case 32. On 1/14/38 application was made for the placement in a foster home of a sixteen year old boy badly crippled by poliomyelitis. He was at a hospital for crippled children at the time and there were not sufficient funds for him to remain there. His return home seemed inadvisable because of an irritable disposition and an inferiority complex caused by his infirmity. The Agency assisted in obtaining funds from the Board of Public Welfare to keep him in the hospital longer.

One year later application was again made as he was ready for discharge from the hospital. He was still badly crippled, but was now able to walk without braces and had normal use of his hands. The Agency this time placed him in a foster home in the hopes of helping his disposition and assisted him in find-

ing employment painting toys.

In this case, the first application was considered by the Agency, but when it was found that the boy might profit from further treatment in the hospital, funds were secured by the Agency to keep him there. The second application had exactly the same circumstances except the hospital felt that they could help him no further. With the medical services terminated, there arose a need for social service. It fell to the Agency to fill this need in the boy's life.

Case 33. On 6/8/25 a mother applied for the case of two small children due to the death of the father. She withdrew the application when she placed the children with their grandmother.

In 1926 the mother remarried. In 1935 she died.

On 9/4/37 the step-father asked the Agency to care for the boy. The step-father had, in the meantime, remarried and the boy was living with the two step-parents who did not wish to support him. Rather than place the boy in a foster home, the Agency worked out a plan whereby he could live with his own grandmother and be supervised by the Board of Public

Welfare. The case was then closed.

Four years later the Agency was asked by the Board of Public Welfare to care for the boy. As he had become self-supporting, the Board of Public Welfare had closed their case; however, because of his youth he still needed supervision. As the Agency felt it could now help the boy, it accepted him for supervision.

The general policy of public relief agencies is to terminate their services when the need for financial aid no longer exists. Since this boy was self-supporting, the Board of Public Welfare had no recourse but to close the case. Nevertheless, realizing that supervision was still necessary it suggested that the Agency take over the responsibility. As the reasons for application had now shifted from dependency to guidance, the Agency was willing to accept the case.

Case 34. On 9/2/37 an unmarried mother made application to the Agency. She wanted her child to be born outside of the city. Inasmuch as the Agency does not help unmarried mothers until after the child is born, she was referred to a maternity home for unmarried mothers some distance from the city.

Four months later following the birth of her baby the mother returned and asked the Agency to care for the child as her parents would not allow the child in their home. The child was then placed in a foster home.

The first application in this case was a request for information rather than care of the child. As a result of the termination of the services of the maternity home, the responsibility of planning for the mother and child fell to some other agency. Consequently, upon second application the child was accepted.

This case involves a different child in the second application than was requested in the previous application.

Case 35. On 9/16/37 an application was made for the care of an eight year old girl who was very nervous. The mother was emotionally unstable and the father psychotic. Investigation showed that the situation was caused by the mother's dislike of the girl rather than any difficulty within the child herself. The Agency felt that the family could be helped much better by a mental health clinic than by a foster home for the girl as she was of

dull normal intelligence and the family situation did not greatly disturb her.

Consequently, the family was referred to the Child Guidance Clinic.

A second application was made a year later by an aunt when the mother had a nervous breakdown. Again placement was refused as the Child Guidance Clinic had confirmed the Agency's original feeling that the girl's difficulties were caused by the mother. This time the family was referred to the State Department of Mental Health for supervision.

Three months later the State worker found an older girl in the family who was sullen, bad tempered and a problem. The Agency was asked to place this girl in a foster home. As this girl was definitely a problem the Agency agreed to foster home care.

The first two applications were made for the same child who the Agency felt could not be greatly helped by placement; but, it would seem that the Agency, while investigating, should have discovered the difficulties of the older girl. A good investigation implies a thorough understanding not only of the problems of the particular child, but of the entire family sit-

uation. Had the Agency seen this, there might not have been the necessity for a repetition of applications.

Conclusions

From a study of the above cases it would seem that among some applications there are certain social problems that are better helped in their initial stages by some other agency, and that a reapplication is necessary in this type of case before it becomes acceptable to the Agency. In another case the Agency concentrated its investigation upon the individual child for whom application was made, and completely missed any of the problems involving a second child really needing its services. This disclosed a definite need for a more complete investigation into the entire family situation as well as into the immediate problem.

Half of this group of clients had been referred to other agencies, but in spite of this, they had returned. This would indicate that the Agency's policy of referring clients

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

The principal findings with regard to the thirty-five cases studied, which have disclosed many facts useful to the Agency in its future contacts, may be summarized briefly.

Of all the cases studied, the largest group returned to the Agency for assistance with the same problem for which they had previously applied. Special attention was focused on these cases. The fact that they returned with the same problems is prima facie evidence that their problems were not adequately solved by their earlier contact with the Agency. A large portion of these returned after having tried plans of their own by placing their children privately. At the time of their first applications these clients had been given a service in which the Agency had tried to work out a suitable plan, but which to the clients did not appear satisfactory. However, their return for further help, which resulted in their acceptance of foster home care, was their own admission that they had finally decided that the Agency could make plans better than they could. As the Agency cannot prevent clients from making their own plans which do not involve Agency care, there is in these cases no reflection whatever on the judgement of the Agency.

Half of this group of clients had been referred to other agencies, but in spite of this, they had returned. This would indicate that the Agency's policy of referring clients

to other agencies is not necessarily sound. On the evidence of these cases, more thought should be given to the client's problem to prevent him from unnecessarily being passed back and forth between agencies until an ultimate solution is reached.

Two cases returned for further help because of the health of the mother. As the Agency has no control over these unfortunate circumstances, the fact that the clients had to return was a matter of chance rather than anything else, and did not reflect upon the judgement of the Agency in any way.

In a few cases the Agency could have assisted the child at the time of the first application rather than waiting for a reapplication. Two of these were cases in which the Agency feared that it would be assuming the responsibility for a child who was undesirable from the standpoint of a private child-placing agency. Both were reconsidered when a reapplication was made by another agency and the earlier decision reversed. This number is very small considering the fact that the Agency has to weigh the risk of being left solely responsible for every child it takes. As only two cases of this kind appear in this study it should not be taken as indicative of any serious weakness in the Agency.

Two other cases however, disclosed that the Agency was not performing its function by its failure to either refer the cases to some other agency or else carry on further itself. The Agency permitted a boy to suffer in an undesirable situa-

tion when by further investigation it quite possibly could have been rectified. Likewise, the Agency permitted a girl to remain in an undesirable situation in an attempt to obtain money for support from her father. It would seem from these cases that the welfare of the child should be the primary consideration, and the support of the child secondary. The Agency used very poor judgment in refusing the care of these children and should be criticized for its decision in the light of subsequent developments.

It is interesting to note the similarity in types of problems at the first and second applications. In the first applications there were problems of domestic maladjustment, death of parents, problem child, poor home conditions, insufficient income, health of the mother, and illegitimacy. In the second applications there were fewer classifications: illegitimacy, domestic maladjustment, problem child, poor home conditions, and health of the mother. Two classifications had disappeared, those of death of parent and insufficient income. Probably as a result of an earlier contact with the Agency the clients learned that the Agency did not assist a family whose primary problem was lack of income. This can only be a speculation which would have to be substantiated by further research. Certainly, the fact that there were no reapplications due to the death of a parent was not the result of any educative process in connection with the first application, but rather the use of a different term on the part of the worker

who took the application. This would point to a need for a clearer definition of terms, as long as the Agency maintains the policy of classifying its applications by a phrase. At the present time applications may be classified first as "death of parent," yet when a reapplication is made and the circumstances are the same, it may be classified as "problem child." Several such classifications appear in the Day Book of the Agency.

The outstanding types of problems that returned for further help were those involving illegitimacy and domestic situations. Most of these represent cases in which there is the loss of a parent caused by various reasons: divorce, separation, desertion or death.

It has already been shown that there is a relationship of time between the types of reapplications. Those returning with the same problems return much sooner than those whose second problems were different.

Certain conclusions were drawn from an analysis of the cases as to the causes of reapplications. Persons applied to the Agency for help with problems which were not within the province of the Agency. Out of thirty-five applications, seventeen had to be referred to some other agency. This indicates that the Agency acted as a source of information to many clients. Yet in referring these cases to other agencies, they eventually returned and were accepted by the Agency, a fact previously discussed. As this happens in almost half of the

cases it indicates that there has been considerable duplication of effort on the part of one or more agencies. This duplication might be reduced by combining with the family agency so that there is one intake department capable of meeting both family and children's problems.

Clients reapplied who were not ready for the Agency's help the first time. The cases which fell into this classification are: the parents whose separation was imminent but had not actually occurred, the mother whose child was not yet born, and the client who would not give the Agency the full information requested.

Certain suggestions for improvement in the methods of the Agency can be deduced from this study. The Agency sometimes seems to narrow its attention to the child involved in the application rather than to consider the family as a whole. One glaring example of this is shown whereby the Agency entirely missed the fact that another child in the family was the one needing the Agency's services rather than the one for whom the application was made. This means that the initial investigation must be more comprehensive than it is now so that a sound decision can be made on the best methods of helping a child or the family.

The Agency tends to wait for symptoms to appear in a child before taking any action. Three cases came to the Agency for help with family problems out of which the children's problems grew. Under the present policies, the worker should be

more alert to family problems and refer them to a family agency. Also, further and more complete investigations of family problems might reveal children's problems much earlier than the Agency now discovers them.

Cases in which the Agency is asked to investigate a family should either be referred to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, or else followed up by the Agency itself. Under no circumstances should they be dropped as has been done. Nor should the Agency hedge on technicalities before accepting a child that really needs its help. This is done at the expense of the child and as long as the Agency exists for the welfare of children it would seem to abuse its right of existence by using the child as an instrument of force to compel parents to relinquish guardianship or to help support the child involved.

Finally it is suggested that the Agency try harder to "sell itself" to parents who are thinking of private placements. The Agency knows that it is better able to make placements than is the parent, and sees many cases in which this plan fails, almost disastrously. The Agency seems to prefer to allow the client to withdraw to make his own plans for placement, rather than take aggressive steps to warn the client away from this rather risky procedure. If it were able more often to control this situation, it would not only be of definite service to the child, but it would also be in a position to help the parent who may be in need of as much assist-

ance as the child.

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